



News Release

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New Program Helps Employers Connect with an Untapped Workforce

Work Ability Awareness Campaign Launched

(Salt Lake City, UT) –Utahns with disabilities contribute to the strength of our workforce. Yet some employers and even people with disabilities themselves may not be aware of this untapped workforce. Because of this, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is launching Work Ability, a new program and awareness campaign. Work Ability lets Utah employers know the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. The program also reaches out to Utahns with disabilities to tell them how to work and still qualify for important benefits like Medicaid.

People with disabilities contribute to Utah's workforce in many ways. Studies have shown that people with disabilities:

- Have better retention rates than employees without disabilities, resulting in money saved in training costs
- Perform work just as well as other employees
- Are not absent more than other employees

Employers benefit from hiring those with disabilities in these ways:

- An untapped labor pool from which to hire dependable workers
- A more diverse workforce for new ideas, viewpoints, and approaches for solving business challenges
- Economic benefits like tax credits and tax deductions
- Loyal workers

“Hiring people with disabilities is good business for Utah,” says Governor Olene Walker.

“Some employers don’t know that people with disabilities make great employees, and people with disabilities receive many benefits by going to work.”

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Work Ability is offering a free interactive CD to employers and potential employees who have a disability. Marriott will use the CD to help supervisors accommodate people with disabilities. The CD includes information on recruiting, hiring, financial benefits, and office etiquette for employers who hire those with disabilities. For potential employees, the CD explains the benefits of working, how to find a job, interviewing skills, health resources, and agencies to help them prepare for and succeed at work. A radio campaign to tell employers and potential employees about Work Ability begins today. Posters, postcards, and kits for employers are also being distributed. Work Ability is a partnership between the UDOH, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, and Department of Workforce Services. Call toll free 1-877-2GO-WORK or (1-877-246-9675); or visit www.workabilityutah.org for more information.

“The Work Ability program lets Utah know that people with disabilities have abilities that contribute to our economy and community,” says Catherine Chambless, Work Ability Director, UDOH. “Linking people with resources and strategies to manage their health challenges so they can work is a priority of Work Ability.”

“Coming to work was scary at first. But it is worth it. Now I have my own money, friends at work, and the opportunity to serve customers,” says Julia Blás, Employee, Marriott Worldwide Reservations Salt Lake City. “If I can do it, you can do it.”

Medicaid covers about 20,000 adults with disabilities. Social Security, another important benefit for those with disabilities, covers 35,000 adults with disabilities. Many people receive both.

Nearly 200,000 Utah adults have disabilities. Hundreds of them are currently succeeding at work. Many more Utahns with disabilities and their employers can benefit by calling Work Ability.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.